

A DEEPer Look at Student Engagement, Learning, and Success

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**We all want the same thing—
an undergraduate experience
that results in high levels of
learning and personal
development for all students.**



Advance Organizers

- 1. How do we get more students to take greater advantage of our resources for learning?**
- 2. What are 2-3 key challenges facing my campus in terms of**
 - enhancing student engagement and learning?
 - improving educational effectiveness?
 - promoting student success?

What major public research university ranks in the top 10 among its peers in terms of external grants and contracts but also did six major studies of the quality of the undergraduate experience of its students since 1986?

University of Michigan

Sharing the Findings from Project DEEP

Jossey-Bass
April, 2005

STUDENT SUCCESS *in* COLLEGE

CREATING CONDITIONS THAT MATTER

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AAHE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
for HIGHER EDUCATION™

Project DEEP

**To discover,
document and
describe what high
performing
institutions do and
how they achieved
this level of
effectiveness.**



DEEP Selection Criteria

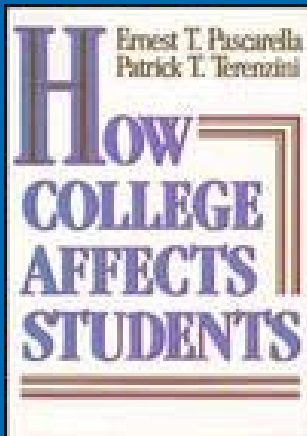
Controlling for student and institutional characteristics (i.e., selectivity, diversity, institutional type), DEEP schools have:

- **Higher-than-predicted graduation rates**
- **Higher-than-predicted NSSE scores**

Region and institutional type, special mission



What *Really* Matters in College: Student Engagement



“The research is unequivocal: students who are actively involved in both academic and out-of-class activities gain more from the college experience than those who are not so involved.”

***Ernest T. Pascarella & Patrick T. Terenzini,
How College Affects Students***

Lessons From the Research

- **What matters most is what students do, not who they are**
- **A key factor is the quality of effort students expend**
- **Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward the right activities**

Two Components of Student Engagement

1. What students do --
time and energy
devoted to
educationally
purposeful activities
2. What institutions do --
using effective
educational practices
to induce students to
do the right things



Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987)

- **Student-faculty contact**
- **Active learning**
- **Prompt feedback**
- **Time on task**
- **High expectations**
- **Respect for diverse learning styles**
- **Cooperation among students**



National Survey of Student Engagement *(pronounced “nessie”)*

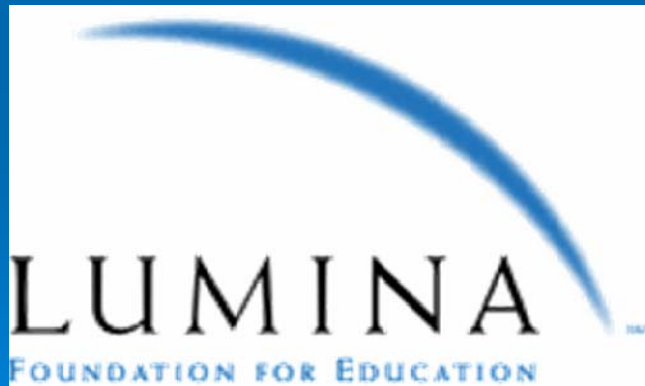


Community College Survey of Student Engagement *(pronounced “sessie”)*



College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development

Project DEEP Partners



DEEP Guiding Questions:

- **What do high-performing colleges and universities do to promote student success?**
- **What campus features -- policies, programs, and practices -- contribute to high levels of engagement and better than predicted graduation rates?**

Project DEEP*

Doctoral Extensives

University of Kansas

University of Michigan

Doctoral Intensives

George Mason University

Miami University (Ohio)

University of Texas El Paso

Master's Granting

Fayetteville State University

Gonzaga University

Longwood University

Liberal Arts

California State, Monterey Bay

Macalester College

Sweet Briar College

The Evergreen State College

Sewanee: University of the South

Ursinus College

Wabash College

Wheaton College (MA)

Wofford College

Baccalaureate General

Alverno College

University of Maine at Farmington

Winston-Salem State University

* Selection criteria: Higher-than-predicted graduation rates; Higher-than-predicted student engagement scores

Research Approach

➤ Case study method

- Team of 24 researchers review institutional documents and conduct multiple-day site visits
- Observe individuals, classes, group meetings, activities, events
- Discover and describe effective practices and programs, campus culture

➤ Roundtables conducted by AAHE to explore uses of NSSE data for improvement of student learning

Points to Ponder

- Which of these practices are transferable and adaptable to your institution?
- What are the implications of DEEP for:
 - ✓ For academic administrators
 - ✓ For student affairs staff?
 - ✓ For faculty members?
 - ✓ For others (e.g., governing boards, librarians, etc.)?

Effective Educational Practices

**Level of
Academic
Challenge**

**Active &
Collaborative
Learning**

**Student
Faculty
Interaction**

**Enriching
Educational
Experiences**

**Supportive
Campus
Environment**

Academic Challenge


Intentional socialization to academic expectations

Wheaton new students read a common book and essays by faculty that respond to the reading. Assigned readings, faculty responses, and the website combine to introduce incoming students to preferred ways to grapple with intellectual issues.

Academic Challenge

Learning-intensive practices

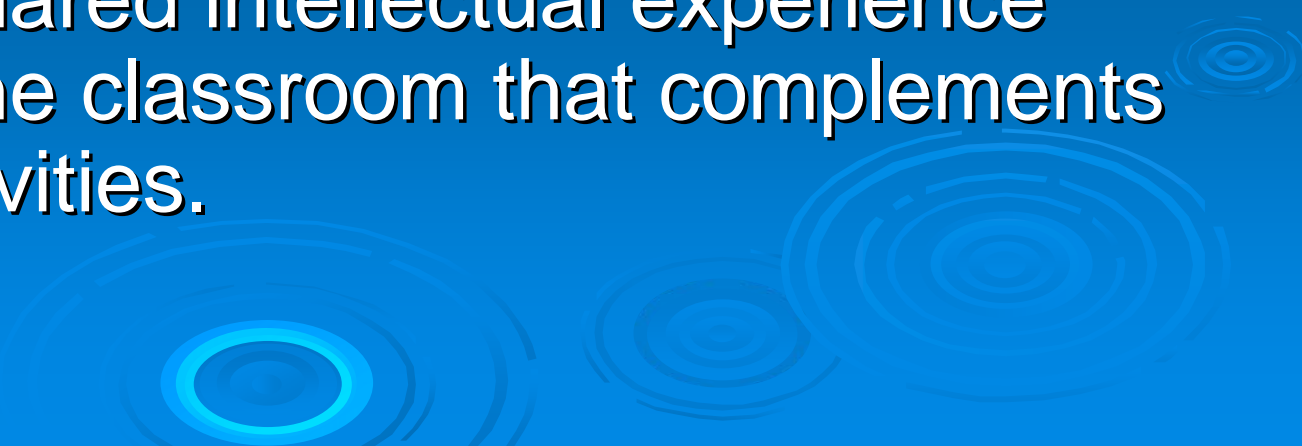
George Mason requires every student to take from 1-3 writing-intensive courses. They along with most DEEP schools have strong writing centers to emphasize and support the importance of good writing.

The background of the slide features several decorative, concentric blue circles of varying sizes, resembling ripples in water, located in the lower right and bottom center areas.

Academic Challenge

Learning-intensive practices

Ursinus College's Common Intellectual Experience (CIE) is a two-semester course for first year students. Common readings and the "Uncommon Hour" provides opportunities for students to have a shared intellectual experience outside the classroom that complements class activities.

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Active and Collaborative Learning

Ample applied learning opportunities

University of Maine at Farmington's Student Work Initiative employs students in meaningful work in student services, laboratories, and field-research. Such experiences provide opportunities to apply what they are learning to practical, real-life situations.

Active and Collaborative Learning

Ample applied learning opportunities

- CSUMB requires all students to complete a lower and upper-level service learning experience

Student-Faculty Interaction

Undergraduate research opportunities

Miami's Undergraduate Summer Scholars (USS) program enables students to do research or other creative activities in the summer under the supervision of faculty. In the fall, a Symposium provides opportunities to present projects to students and faculty. "Having a Summer Scholar in the classroom enhances the learning of all students."

Student-Faculty Interaction


Early exposure to faculty

Winston Salem State, discipline-specific orientation activities immediately immerse students in the culture of facilitate early bonds with faculty. These faculty members eventually become one of the most influential adults in students' academic lives, making sure they are successful in all aspects of college life.

Student-Faculty Interaction

Student role in campus governance

All University of Kansas committees are required to have 20% student representation, including search and screen committees. Therefore, new faculty recruits interact with students from the start.



Enriching Educational Experiences

Cross-cultural experiences

Alverno and George Mason intentionally craft shorter study abroad experiences that meet the needs of their large non-traditional population. Similarly, Kansas and UMF arrange class-based trips that are more accessible to their first generation students

Enriching Educational Experiences

Required Enriching Experiences

All Ursinus students complete an Independent Learning Experience (ILE), such as an independent research or creative project, internship, study abroad, student teaching, or summer fellow program or comparable summer research program.

Enriching Experiences

Infusion of diversity

Macalester has many initiatives to promote diversity. Internships in the Twin Cities, annual conference on race, participation in the Mellon Minority Undergraduate Fellowship Program and the Lealtad-Suzuki Center.

Center programs: Hewlett Pluralism and Unity Program, which engages 30 first-year students in dialogues, community outreach to advance understanding of identity development and diversity, and Student Collectives (Black Women of the Diaspora, Men of Color etc.), opportunities for students to talk about diversity issues within their collective and in inter-group dialogue.

Supportive Campus Environment

➤ **Intentionally orchestrated, educationally purposeful peer interaction**

Longwood values “students helping other students” as a catalyst to promote student achievement and learning and “to wake up students’ volunteerism and academic pursuits.” Peer mentors in the Longwood Seminar, residence halls leadership roles, and the strong co-curricular program makes this possible.

Supportive Campus Environment

Multiple interventions woven together

At CSUMB:

- Library Staff assists Capstone students to further develop their research questions and archive of Capstone projects
- Senior research projects celebrated at Capstone Conferences (Dec., May)
- Describe under-served students as “vision students,” underscoring their importance at the institution

Six Shared Conditions

1. **“Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy**
2. **Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning**
3. **Environments Adapted for Educational Advantage**
4. **Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success**
5. **Improvement-Oriented Ethos**
6. **Shared Responsibility for Educational Quality**

Worth Noting

- ***Many roads to an engaging institution***
 - ❖ **No one best model**
 - ❖ **Different combinations of complementary, interactive, synergistic conditions**
- ***Anything worth doing is worth doing well at scale***

Lessons from Project DEEP

1. *“Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy*

- ❖ **Some deviate little from original mission; others have new missions and expanded educational purposes.**
- ❖ **Missions, values, and aspirations are transparent and understandable.**
- ❖ **Sustained widespread understanding and endorsement of educational purposes.**

Mission and Culture

- CSUMB is a public liberal arts institution with a distinctive curriculum and outcomes- based education model. Its “Vision Statement” is the driving force behind all decisions and actions taken at the institution.

Mission and Culture

- Macalester College students, faculty and staff understand and articulate the College's core values of academic excellence, service, multiculturalism and internationalism. These values are enacted in the curriculum and co-curriculum.

Mission and Vision

George Mason University:

“The Right Place. The Right Time”

“[We] will be a magnet for outstanding faculty who will devise new ways to approach problems, invent new ways to teach, and develop new knowledge for the benefit of the region and nation...”

Lessons

1. *“Living” Mission and “Lived” Educational Philosophy*

- ❖ **Operating philosophy focuses on students and their success.**
- ❖ **Complementary policies and practices tailored to the school’s mission and students’ needs and abilities.**
- ❖ **Institutional values really *do* guide many important policy and operation decisions.**

Living the Mission

- **“Sea change” at KU to emphasize undergraduate instruction**
- 1. Experienced instructors teach lower division and introductory courses**
- 2. Faculty members from each academic unit serve as “Faculty Ambassadors” to the Center for Teaching Excellence**
- 3. Course enrollments kept low in many undergraduate courses; 80% have 30 or fewer students; 93% 50 or fewer students.**

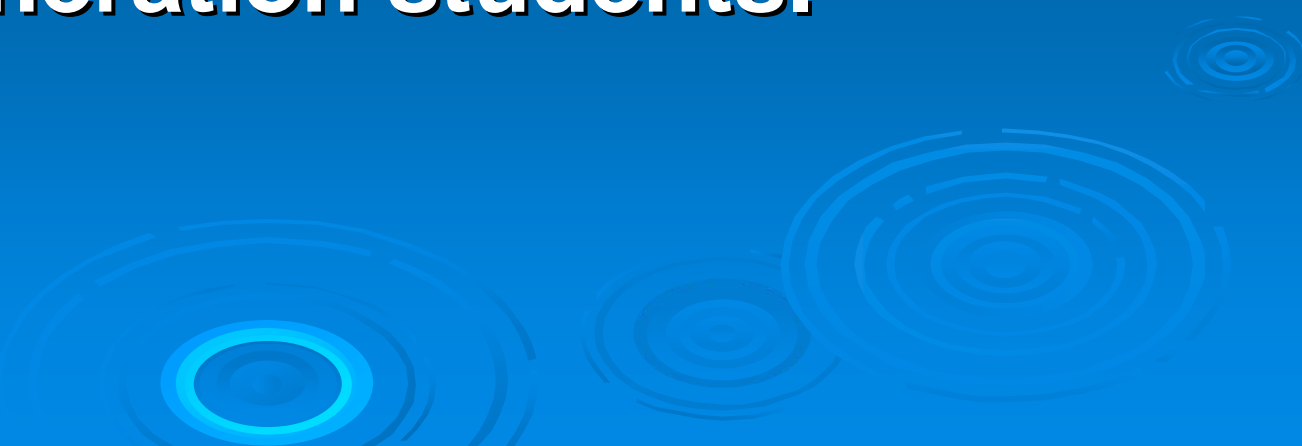
Lessons

2. *Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning*

- ❖ Student learning and personal development are high priorities.
- ❖ Bent toward engaging pedagogies
- ❖ “Cool passion” for talent development (students, faculty, staff)
- ❖ Making time for students
- ❖ Accommodate students’ preferred learning styles

Build on student strengths

**University of Texas at El Paso
uses learning communities and
course-based service learning
and volunteerism to actively
engage its mostly commuter,
first-generation students.**



Lessons

Unshakeable Focus on Student Learning

- ❖ Faculty and administrators challenge students with high standards
- ❖ Recruit and reward faculty and staff committed to pedagogical experimentation
- ❖ “Work with the students we have,” in contrast to focusing only on the best and the brightest

Reinforce academic engagement outside the classroom

Fayetteville State academic departments sponsor academic clubs with faculty advisors. College of Education sponsors 10 student organizations that connect classroom content with co-curricular experiences. Some organizations provide tutoring services.

Lessons

3. *Environments Adapted for Educational Advantage*


- ❖ **DEEP schools make wherever they are “a good place for a college!”**
- ❖ **Connected to the local community in mutually beneficial, educationally purposeful ways.**
- ❖ **“Place conscious.”**

Linking campus and community

George Mason's Century Club: Business, professional, and government organizations promote partnerships between the University and the metro area business community. Members volunteer to work with faculty and students in job and internship fairs, resume and interviewing workshops, and networking opportunities.


Lessons

3. *Environments Adapted for Educational Advantage*

- ❖ **Buildings, classrooms, and other physical structures are adapted to “human scale.”**
 - ❖ **Psychological size fosters engagement with peers, faculty and staff.**
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Physical space promotes collaboration

Wofford's Milliken Building -- its science center -- was intentionally designed with plenty of "fishbowls" and other areas for group work space. "Homework lounges," adjacent to faculty offices, also promote interactive learning.



GMU Digital Environments: Technology enriched learning

- ✓ **Internet access in all dorm rooms**
- ✓ **Staffed, open-access computer labs**
- ✓ **State-of-the-art electronic classrooms**
- ✓ **On-line mentoring and advising.**

Technology Across the Curriculum initiative:

- ✓ **100+ courses redesigned affecting 12,000 students.**
- ✓ **STAR (Student Technology Assistance and Resource) Center serves both students and faculty.**

Lessons

4. *Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success*

- ❖ **Make plain to students the resources and services available to help them succeed.**
- ❖ **Some guideposts tied directly to the academic program; others related to student and campus culture.**
- ❖ **Institutional publications accurately describe what students experience.**

Socialization to academic expectations

Wofford first-year students read a common novel and write a short essay connecting it to their own lives. The eight best essays are published and distributed to all new students, creating the first class celebrities.

Intentional acculturation

Miami's First Year Experience (FYE) Committee designed a way to bring more coherence to the first-year by linking: (1) Miami Plan Foundation courses taught by full-time faculty; (2) optional first-year seminars; (3) community living options that emphasize leadership and service; and (4) cultural, intellectual, and arts events.

Lessons

4. *Clearly Marked Pathways to Student Success*

- ❖ **Efforts tailored to student needs.**
- ❖ **Mutually reinforcing student expectations and behavior, institutional expectations, and institutional reward systems.**
- ❖ **Redundant early warning systems and safety nets**

Redundant early warning system

FSU's Early Alert program enables faculty to contact first-year student mentors and University College to alert them about students experiencing difficulty during the first two weeks of the semester. Mentors contact students to advise and refer as appropriate.

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Examples

- Sweet Briar – “intentionally residential”
- Ursinus – Common Intellectual Experience and “frosh clustering”
- Wofford – preceptors
- Michigan – 11 LLCs, WISE, MCSP
- Fayetteville State – “Suite Talks”
- Sewanee – no cable tv
- Macalester – “it’s what we don’t have

Lessons

5. Improvement oriented ethos

- ❖ **Positive restlessness**
- ❖ **Self-correcting orientation**
- ❖ **Continually question, “are we performing as well as we can?”**
- ❖ **Confident, responsive, but never quite satisfied...**
- ❖ **“We know who we are and what we aspire to.”**

Assessment supports learning

CSUMB's Center for Teaching, Learning & Assessment assists faculty in assessing student performance at the start of classes so that instructors have a starting point by which to gauge progress.

“Assessment is a major form of pedagogy. The only kind of assessment we want is one that promotes learning.”

Self-correcting orientation

- **FSU Chancellor concerned about first-to-second year retention rates**
- **Chancellor launches Freshman Year Initiative**
- **Vision of holistic student development engaged all FSU community members**
- **Expanded facilities to support students**

Lessons

6. Shared responsibility for educational quality

- ❖ Leaders articulate and use core operating principles in decision making
- ❖ Supportive educators are everywhere
- ❖ Student and academic affairs collaboration
- ❖ Student ownership
- ❖ A caring, supportive community

Conclusions

- *No blueprint for success*
- *Institutions created own way, experimenting with home-grown ideas and adapting promising practices discovered at other institutions*
- *Complementary, synergistic conditions promote student learning*
- *Effective educational practices are “sticky”*

Conclusions

- *Learning-centered philosophy*
- *Acculturate and affirm students*
- *High expectations balanced by support*
- *Capitalize on location*
- *Focus on improvement-oriented assessment*
- *Sustained from many levels, no “unsupported mandates”*

Levers for Change

- Reframe problems into opportunities
- Make the case for student success
- Commit resources to promising ideas
- Connect complementary efforts
- Put someone in charge
- Data driven reflection and action
- Stay the course

Recommendation

1. Lay out the path to student success

- a. *Draw a map for student success*
- b. *Front load resources to smooth the transition*
- c. *Teach newcomers about the campus culture*

Recommendation

1. Lay out the path to student success

- d. Create a sense of specialness*
- e. Emphasize student initiative*
- f. If something works, consider requiring it*
- g. Focus on underengaged students*

Recommendation

2. Attract, socialize and reward competent people

- a. Pick institutional leaders who are right for the times, campus culture, and institutional trajectory*
- b. Recruit faculty and staff committed to student learning*
- c. Emphasize student centeredness in faculty and staff orientation*

Recommendation

2. Attract, socialize and reward competent people

- d. *Make room for differences*
- e. *Hire and support competent staff to insure high quality student support services*

Recommendation

3. Promote and reward collaboration – across functional lines and between the campus and community

a. Tighten the philosophical and operational linkages between academic and student affairs

- Peer tutoring and mentoring***
- First year seminars***
- Learning communities***

Recommendation

3. Promote and reward collaboration – across functional lines and between the campus and community

b. Harness the expertise of available resources

c. Make governance a shared responsibility

d. Form partnerships with the local community

Recommendation

- 4. Put money where it will make a difference in student engagement**
 - a. Align the reward system with the institutional mission, values, and priorities***
 - b. Invest in student learning and activities that contribute to student success***
 - c. Invest in faculty members who are doing the right things***


Recommendation

4. Put money where it will make a difference in student engagement

d. Invest in teaching and learning centers

e. Adopt a zero based budgeting system that focuses on student learning processes and outcomes

Recommendation

- 5. Sunset redundant and ineffective programs; feed those that are demonstrably effective**
 - a. Rethink resource investments***
 - b. Review and revise time commitments and priorities***
 - c. Clear out the deadwood***
- 

Discussion Questions

- Which of these practices are transferable and adaptable to your institution?
- Which practices are bounded by institutional size or mission?
- What current policies and practices promote high levels of student engagement?
- What are 1-2 steps you can take to cultivate educational practices and campus conditions that promote student success?

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